Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University,

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A Proposal for Doctoral Research Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities,

Entitled

Representation of Homosexuality in Select Novels of R. Raj Rao and Manju Kapur: A Queer Perspective.

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Introduction:

Queer theory emerged out of feminist, gay and lesbian studies in early 1990's. Annamarie Jagose wrote *Queer Theory: An introduction* in 1997. This term is used as an umbrella term for culturally marginalized LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community. This theory questions the concept of sexuality and the traditional thinking of considering LGBT sexual minorities as 'other' to the dominant heterosexuals. Michel Foucault, Jonathan Dollimore, Eve Sedgewik, Judith Butler and Jerry Goldie are the most significant queer theorist of 20th and 21st centuries. Indian scholars such as Pramod Nayyar, Brinda Bose, Ranjita Biswas, Shohini Ghosh and R. Raj Rao have contributed to queer theory. Indian writers took daring steps to bring out the latent realities of different sexual identities and sexual behaviours that breach the heterosexual social or symbolic boundaries. Ismat Chughtai's Urdu short story *Lihaf* (1942) created controversy for featuring homosexual characters. In 1970's and 1980's gay and lesbian characters began resurfacing in Indian literature. Shakuntala Devi's *The World of Homosexuals* (1977) is considered as the first study on homosexuals in India, Marathi playwright Vijay Tendulkar wrote about a lesbian relationship in his Marathi play *Mitrachi Goshta* (1981). Mahesh Dattani's play *Dance Like a Man.* (2006) and *Seven Steps Around the Fire.* (2012) is set amongst the 'Hijra' community in India, authors like Anita Nair and Shobha De have dealt with the lesbian themes in their novels.

R. Raj Rao:

R. Raj Rao (born 1955) is a retired Professor and Head of the Department of English at Savitribai Phule University Pune where he taught Creative Writing and Queer Studies. He is critically acclaimed creative writer and one of India's leading gay rights activist. Rao's contribution to queer writing and LGBT literature in India is immense. He wrote a collection of poem *Bomgay* (1994) which was adapted in a film Bomgay (1996) by Riyad Vinci Vadia which is India's first gay film. Rao wrote two novels on the theme of homosexuality. *The Boyfriend* (2003) which is considered as the first gay novel of India. *Hostel room131* (2010) is the second novel of Rao on same sex love and homophobic society. His third novel *Lady Lolita's Lover* (2015) also contains some notable queer elements. His novels appeared in the anthologies *Yarana: Gay Writings from India* (2009) and *Out! Stories from the New Queer India* (2012). He also wrote non fictions like *Whistling in the Dark: Twenty One Queer Interviews* (2009) and *Criminal Love? : Queer Theory, Culture and Politics in India* (2017).

***The Boyfriend* (2003):**

This novel is published by Penguin India Publication is considered as India's first gay novel in which invisible gay culture of Mumbai is highlighted. Yudi, the protagonist of this novel is an upper class English speaking freelance journalist living in Mumbai. Yudi is gay and gets attracted towards the working class men. One day he picks up Milind, a nineteen year old dalit boy in the Churchgate loo, after hurried sex at his flat Yudi gets rid of Milind but few months later the Babri Masjid riots of 1992-1993 make him worry for Milind. They meet again and spend a week at Yudi's flat. A twist in a plot occurs when Milind disappears for the second time, this makes Yudi depressed and tormented. Milind's financial need to support his family brings him back to spend a night with Yudi. Hereafter their relationship continues out of mutual need of money for Milind and of love for Yudi.

***Hostel Room 131* (2010):**

This novel is about a love story of a guy couple and the homophobic attitude of society towards homosexuals. Siddharth and Sudhir meet at a friend's room in Pune's engineering college hostel and fall instantly in love with each other; Sidhharth becomes an obsessed lover of Sudhir over the next seven years and pursues the object of his lust and affection, despite his job as a college lecturer. This gay couple faces many difficulties including Sudhir's family when they come to know about their son's relationship with Sidhharth. Homophobic Ravi Humbe also rejects and opposes this relationship, but Siddharth gets support from his friends Gaurav and Ravi. The protagonist succumbs to the pressure of his beloved and the homophobic society for the acceptance of their relationship.

Manju kapoor:

Manju Kapoor (born in Amritsar) taught English literature for over 25 years in Miranda House College, Delhi University. She is deeply influenced by feminist thinking and declares herself a feminist, her first novel *Difficult Daughters* (1998) won the Commonwealth Prize for the best first novel. Her other novels are *A Married Woman* (2002), *Home* (2006), *The Immigrant* (2008), *Custody* (2013), and *Brothers* (2016). She has also edited *shaping the world: women writers on themselves* (2014).

***A Married Woman* (2002):**

This novel is about a lesbian relationship of Astha, an educated working woman with Pipeelika, a widow. Astha stuggles for a social cause and recognition, her husband is busy in his business, this loneliness makes her feel alienated and dissatisfied in her married life and she turns lesbian, develops a relationship with Pipeelika which gives her more comfort but later she gets trapped in inescapable situation. This novel highlights the self discovery of a lesbian couple towards sexual and psychological freedom. Manju Kapur uses relationship of Astha and Pipeelika as a shade of female religious identity and complexity in India which indicates that woman is supposed to enjoy her sexuality only in heterosexual norms.

Review of literature:

Since *A Married Woman* (2002), *The Boyfriend* (2003), and *Hostel Room131* (2010) these all are recent works and there is not much critical resources available on these novels yet. There are only few opinions on some web links on the internet, and some research papers published in online journals and edited books, apart from this there are many reference books available on Indian queer writings and LGBT literature which are very helpful to understand homosexual relationships and gender identities in Indian literature. *Same Sex Love in India: Readings in Indian Literature* (2001) by Ruth Vanita and Saleem Kidwai which highlights the literary history of queer writings in India from Mahabharata to contemporary works. Arvind Narrain's *Queer: Despised Sexuality, Law and Social Change* (2004) is also a valuable book to understand different sexual orientations and their issues. Maya Sharma's *Loving Woman: Being Lesbian in Unprivileged India*.(2006) and Ashwini Sukthankar's *Facing the Mirror: Lesbian Writing from India.*(1999) are very important books to study lesbian sexualities in India. *The Man Who Was Woman and Other Queer Tales From Hindu Lore* (2002) by Devdatt Pattanaik is an important book to understand queer identities in traditional Hindu stories. *Made in India: Decolonization, Queer Sexualities, Trans/national projects*. (2005) by Suparna Bhaskaran is also a useful book to understand queer and heterosexual consciousness. Ruth Vanita's *Love's Rite: Same Sex Marriage in India and the West* (2005) focuses on homosexual weddings and same sex couple suicides in India. The latest book of R. Raj Rao which is published this year *Criminal Love?: Queer Theory, Culture and Politics in India* (2017) is also a very important reference book which focuses on the reality of Indian queer sexualities. All these source books will provide proper ways to study LGBT sexualities and homosexual identities.

Title of the Research:

Representation of Homosexuality in Select Novels of R. Raj Rao and Manju Kapur: A Queer Perspective.

Hypothesis:

1) These novels represent homosexual relationships.

2) These novels deal with the concepts and the issues within the realm of queer studies.

3) These novels highlight all the aspects of struggle of being homosexual in homophobic society.

4) These novels show a queer world through the homosexual characters which is dismissed and ignored by the society.

5) These novels are a gateway to understand queer identities, their relationships and struggle as being sexual minority.

Objectives:

1) To study homosexual identities and their relationships with one another in the novels of R. Raj Rao and Manju Kapur.

2) To study the homophobic society's discrimination towards the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community in India.

3) To study the psychological stress of homosexuals to live in a body that is different to their gender identity.

4) To study the scope and limitations of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) literature in India.

5) To study the struggle and the quest for sexual identity of culturally and socially marginalized sexual minorities.

Resource material and methodology:

The study focuses on the critical analysis of homosexuality in the select novels of R. Raj Rao and Manju Kapoor on the basis of their artistic merits, the themes and characterization etc. The critical analysis of select novels is the core of the present research. The study will be based on resources like primary and secondary data in printed and electronic form. The MLA Handbook of Research Methodology will be followed for citation and documentation of resources. The researcher will follow the Ph.D. ordinance of the university. Various journals, reference books, and other useful critical resources will be used for the present study. The present research work does not require any field work so the interpretive and analytic approach will be used with proper citation.

Primary sources:

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Proposed chapter scheme:

Chapter I: Introduction

Chapter II: The Boyfriend: The Chaotic Side of Mumbai's Gay Subculture

Chapter III: Hostel Room 131: Homophobic Attitude of Society Towards a Gay Couple

Chapter IV: A Married Woman: A Lesbian Feminism

Chapter V: Conclusion

Bibliography

Chapter I: Introduction

In this introductory chapter the brief introduction of authors will be given, and the topic of the research will be introduced in detail. The literary history of queer writings in India from Mahabharata to contemporary works will be studied in this chapter. The reality of Indian LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) community and homophobic society's discrimination towards them will be discussed; and queer and heterosexual consciousness will be studied in detail in this introductory chapter.

Chapter II: *The Boyfriend*: The Chaotic Side of Mumbai's Gay Subculture

The Boyfriend (2003) is considered as India's first gay novel in which invisible gay subculture of Mumbai is highlighted. Yudi, the protagonist of this novel is an upper class English speaking freelance journalist living in Mumbai develops a relationship with Milind, a nineteen year old dalit boy. Their homosexual identities and relationship with each other, and the psychology of a guy couple and their difference in age, class, and caste will be discussed in this chapter. Milind starts working for a call boy agency of a gay bollywood star all these incidents will help to study the chaotic side of Mumbai's gay subculture in this chapter.

Chapter III: *Hostel Room 131*: Homophobic Attitude of Society towards a Gay Couple

Hostel Room 131 (2010) is about a love story of a guy couple and the homophobic attitude of society towards homosexuals. Siddharth and Sudhir meet at a friend's room in Pune's engineering college hostel and fall instantly in love with each other, This gay couple faces many difficulties by homophobic Ravi Humbe who hates Siddharth's gay identity, and by Sudhir's family when they come to know about their son's relationship with Sidhharth, through all these circumstances homophobic society's discrimination and psychological stress of homosexuals will be studied in this chapter.

Chapter IV: *A Married Woman*: A Lesbian Feminism

A Married Woman (2002) is about a lesbian relationship of Astha, an educated working woman with Pipeelika, a widow. Astha struggles for a social cause and recognition, her husband is busy in his business, this loneliness makes her feel alienated and dissatisfied in her married life and she turns lesbian, develops a relationship with Pipeelika which gives her more comfort. The shade of female religious identity and complexity in India will be discussed and the self discovery of a lesbian couple towards sexual and psychological freedom will be studied in this chapter.

Chapter V: Conclusion

Conclusion will be the last chapter of the present research work in which the critical observations and proved findings will be described in detail. The final conclusion and significance of the entire study will be documented in this chapter. The critical analysis of select novels will be mentioned in this chapter.

Bibliography:

This part will provide useful material and selected scholarly reference books for the present research work. Important journals, encyclopaedia, reference books and other scholarly material both in printed and electronic form related to this research work will be provided in this part. Important websites related to this study will also be enlisted in this chapter. MLA methodology of research citation format will be used for this section.

Relevance and significance of the study:

Indian LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) literature is very less explored aspect in the field of research. This study will help to understand the queer psychologies, relationships and struggle while living in homophobic society. Now more Indian authors choosing queer plot and themes for their work, homosexuality no longer remain taboo in Indian literature. This study will also be helpful to understand homosexuality in Indian history, law, literature, religion and culture. The idea of queer plot construction and characterization will be studied critically and analyzed properly. This study will also focus on the suffering of homosexual characters in various forms of mental and physical abuse, discrimination and prejudice.

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